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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

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Abstract of the national paper of the Netherlands

I. Space activities of the Netherlands

1. The national space policy of the Netherlands is based on three interconnected objectives. The first objective relates to industry and technology and to maintaining and expanding capabilities both in industry and research facilities. These capabilities should benefit the user community of the Netherlands. The second objective relates to users and to promoting the use of data acquired from space. The third objective is political. The Netherlands regards independent European access to space as a strategic achievement. Moreover, the Netherlands feels that European cooperation in the field of space activities gives more substance to the collective responsibility for solving global problems, such as the enhanced greenhouse effect and the depleting ozone layer.

2. In order to be part of a wide-ranging European space programme, it is essential for the Netherlands to concentrate on participation in the European Space Agency (ESA). The average contribution currently amounts to about 3 per cent of the total budget of ESA.

3. The Netherlands has been actively involved in European space activities from 1962 onwards. In 1974, the Netherlands became the eleventh country in the world to produce its own satellite. Nowadays, the Netherlands spends about 120 million euros per year in space activities. About 75 per cent of the space budget is earmarked for ESA programmes. The rest is spent on the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) (5 per cent) and national and bilateral activities (20 per cent). The largest part of the space budget stems from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, which has primary responsibility for the national space policy. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science also plays an important role, especially in maintaining the leading position of the Netherlands in astronomy and astrophysics. Other ministries using space applications include the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Public Works and Water Management, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Nature Management and Fisheries and the Ministry of Development Cooperation.

4. The Interdepartmental Committee on Space formulates national space policy and advises the Government on participation in space programmes. The Interdepartmental Committee on Space is chaired by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and has among its members representatives of six other ministries, as well as three advisory members. These include:

(a) The Netherlands Agency for Aerospace Programmes (NIVR), an independent organization initiating and monitoring aerospace research and technology programmes, as well as managing national space programmes;

(b) The Space Research Organization Netherlands (SRON), responsible for research programmes including development of space instruments and interpretation of astronomical and Earth observation data;

(c) The Netherlands Remote Sensing Board (BCRS), which coordinates and initiates the application-oriented use of Earth observation data.

II. The position of the Netherlands on the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

5. The Netherlands regards "Space Benefits for Humanity in the Twenty-First Century" as a suitable theme for the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III). The Netherlands has been making efforts to utilize space technology, such as products involving remote sensing data, to accelerate socio-economic development in countries like Burkina Faso and Viet Nam. Furthermore, the Netherlands is involved in environmental efforts at both the local and global levels.

6. UNISPACE III will provide an opportunity for bringing together participants from industrialized and developing countries in order to explore the benefits of space activities. The presence of representatives of the space industry, as well as high-level officials and policy makers, should lead to a greater understanding of the capabilities of space applications for development purposes. Since the 50th International Astronautical Congress will be held in Amsterdam from 4 to 8 October 1999, the Netherlands will focus on bringing the Congress to the attention of UNISPACE III participants. The theme of the Congress will be "Space—An Integral Part of the Information Age". The International Astronautical Federation, in close cooperation with the United Nations, is organizing an annual space workshop for developing nations prior to the Congress. The United Nations/International Astronautical Federation Workshop on Space: An Integral Part of Sustainable Development will be held in Amsterdam and Enschede, the Netherlands, from 30 September to 3 October 1999. The theme of the workshop is closely related to the theme of UNISPACE III, thereby strengthening goals of UNISPACE III such as establishing partnerships between developing countries and space-related industry.

7. The Netherlands supports a strong United Nations Programme on Space Applications and feels that regional centres are the right place to execute the programme activities. Through the European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC), established by ESA, the Netherlands hosts many successful training courses and workshops for participants from developing countries. The Netherlands supports the ESA proposal to continue the space application programme of the United Nations and ESA after UNISPACE III and to focus the programme on the operational aspects of space applications.

8. Another area of great importance for the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat is space law. The Netherlands is one of seven States that are parties to all five outer

space treaties and it is constantly making efforts to further the development of international space law. Therefore, because of increasing national and commercial interests, the Netherlands feels that items such as the review of the outer space treaties and also new items like space debris deserve greater emphasis. Last but not least, the Netherlands favours adjustments of the agenda of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space that will lead to less time-consuming and more cost-effective meetings.